Christchurch History Society

Reflecting the past

The Journal

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Christchurch History Society

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A steam train comes in to Christchurch Station on the line from Ringwood, passing under the bridge taking Bargates into Fairmile. Southern Railway closed down the service on this line in 1935.

Published by

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Reflecting the past

Message from the Chairman

Dear Friends and Members,

What a Spring we are enduring and the Summer promises to be much the same. At least we cannot blame the weather for these difficult times. Thankfully, we are gradually emerging from the pandemic and we can hope for the end of it eventually.

We are all looking forward to meeting again and your committee is not idle, in fact being limited in our movements should be giving us more time for CHS. However, we all agree that gathering together too soon would not be sensible.

Many people were disappointed not to be able to attend a Service at the Priory to commemorate VE75. Lots gathers outside of their homes with neighbours – keeping suitable distances apart – and joined in the two minutes silence. During the afternoon, some of us had cream teas in our own front gardens and were able share some memories. Quite a few houses were suitably decorated for the occasion. In September is VJ75 so perhaps we will be able make up for it then.

Some of your committee, mainly Charles Clarke, Lieve Goudet-Hemelaer and Gordon Raymond, are working on improvements to our website and welcome suggestions. They would also like to hear from a potential Webmaster. Do we have such a person among us?

On Tuesday, your committee are holding a meeting using ZOOM – so that should be fun! I shall have to try and find a patch in my house that will provide a tidy looking background!

Keep safe and well

Christine

Editor's Page

Welcome to another Journal

This month, you will find another article created by Mike Kearley – thanks Mike. Actually, it is part of his article. His full article covers nine pages, so I have cut it into two parts, and will provide the second part next quarter. Mike's family seems to have numerous people leading exciting lives. The history of my family seems to include multiple agricultural labourers living in Essex, together with a few East Londoners. Mike's story covers the life of a boy who ending up leading the British Army by the time he retired. I have made the break in his story as the end of World War Two approaches, and the first part details the bravery and sacrifices of the man in aid of his Country.

Other articles have the flavour of Highcliffe associated with them. One is about a person who resided the latter part of their life in the village, although had travelled a great deal. Another covers one of the large old houses and its associated inhabitants. The third covers the visit of a future British King to the area at the start of the twentieth century.

The main photographs included this quarter are all aerial views. For those needing a few words to accompany the views, I have placed them nearby the photograph. I am happy to hear from anyone that challenges what I say, or can add further details.

Queries for information continue to be received by the Society. Often, they involve some digging into books to pull together a reply, which sometimes can be expanded to produce a few words for the Journal. However, I welcome any input from any member able to provide a few lines,

Ensure you take care of yourselves, and don't take risks.

Editor

Violet Hunter Guthrie

by Geoffrey Bush

Violet Hunter Guthrie was born in the 19th century – 1866 to be precise. The Guthrie family, or the Clan Guthrie as it was better known in Scotland, had a history going way back in time – at least to the 12th century. Many members had given up their lives for their country over the years – like in 1513, at the Battle of Flodden, where James IV fought the English and lost, Alexander Guthrie, the then leader of the Guthrie Clan was killed, together with two of his brothers, and three brothers-in-law. The Guthrie Clan were from Angus on the east coast of Scotland.

Although having deep Scottish traditions, Violet Hunter Guthrie was born in England – in Marylebone. Hunter was the surname of her paternal grandmother, who had died before Violet came into the world. Violet was the seventh of nine children – six girls and three boys. Her father, James Alexander Guthrie was a true, passionate Scot. Born in Scotland, and being way down the list when succession to his father was considered, he had come south to manage the family merchant banking business in London. Well respected in business, he became one of the youngest directors of The Bank of England. He had inherited the title of 4th Baron of Craigie, his ancestor (another James Guthrie) having purchased the lands around Craigie and the title around 1759.

Her mother, formerly Elinor Stirling, was an Australian, her father another having strong Scottish ancestry, and her mother English. Her father was Admiral Sir James Stirling, who had persuaded the government of the day to let him move to Western Australia to establish a colony beside the Swan River. The family had returned to England, where James Guthrie and Elinor had married, and settled in Portland Place to raise their large family. Violet described her mother as 'one of nature's masterpieces where beauty was concerned'.

In 1873, Violet's father died, a relatively young man at forty-nine years of age, leaving her mother to bring up nine children with the age range of four to sixteen years. The family moved from central London, ignoring their Scottish roots, to live in the countryside around Guildford in Surrey, where Elinor's mother had been born.

Some of you may not know who Violet Hunter Guthrie was. If I told you she

married to become Mrs. Violet Stuart-Wortley, is that any help? Yes, she was the last owner of Highcliffe Castle from the Stuart de Rothesay line, and sold the Castle around 1950. In her later years, she wrote several books that documented the lives of herself and others of her family. As she said in the foreword of her third book, 'Grow Old Along With Me', in her near century of deeds and misdeeds, she had witnessed many successes and failures, and she thought it *'not unuseful to put on paper some of the impressions left on my mind'*.

From the third book, she describes her life on leaving Central London for the Surrey countryside. Her mother had chosen to live 'at an old farmhouse set in a couple of hundred acres - rural England at its best'. Violet obviously was enthralled with the change of life style, 'blissfully detached from the outside world, until her brothers holidayed from boarding school, or an elder sister disappeared into other spheres as they married'. Life there was a series of events – the daily one of the cows from an adjacent farm going past the end of the garden for their pasture, and returning in the late afternoon to be milked; the annual one of the threshing machine arrival to produce the grain, and fill the barn with straw; apple harvest and the making of the cider; mushrooming; blackberrying; jam making; birds nesting; the arrival of the first swallow and cuckoo – all part of country life. There was always something to look forward too, except the boredom when the governess thought it necessary to bring out the lesson-books!

Brothers' holidays always brought them back to an outside world for the sheltered sisters, listening awe-struck to their school existence rituals, and learning from them that cricket was of the first and utmost importance! Gradually their eyes were opened to the outside world – discovering that their neighbours in the village often had more children than their own, like the mother who had given birth to twenty children, only nine of which had lived, and who regretted the deaths by stating that if all twenty had survived, she would have had over twice as much pleasure than the existing nine gave her.

As Violet reached her teens, her mother remarried – to one who had known and loved her before her first marriage. He gave added pleasure to the whole family, being an experienced horseman. Soon, she had been taught to ride and follow the hounds, and had the excitement of being with her stepfather behind four horses as they drove around the country lanes. As Violet says in her first book 'Life Without Theory', balmy family life continued on an even keel – neither money worries, nor servant problems. The latter were their friends.

The year now included a London season for the girls, shooting parties in the autumn, and an annual trip abroad, then she tells of how deeply shocked they had all been by reading General William Booth's book, 'Darkest London' that had brought home to them that all of Queen Victoria's subjects did not get three or four good meals a day, or did sleep under sufficient eiderdowns and blankets to keep warm. This was the point in her life that awoke the need to support charity work with more than just monetary assistance.

Her schooling branched out into Europe, where she was able to improve her languages skill, and it was returning from one in Bonn for her 'coming out' season in 1885 that another sadness hit the family. As they all assembled for a family night out to the theatre, a telegram was delivered that announced the deaths of both her eldest sister's husband, together with a much-loved uncle, both fighting in the war taking place in the Sudan.

Her 'coming out' year was therefore delayed to the following spring, but before the 'coming out', she tells of escaping from the world of accompanying chaperones and, thanks to her elder married sister Rosie, was shown how life could be lived, and how her late teens were the years she really began to enjoy herself as her self-confidence soared.

During the latter part of the year of her delayed 'coming out', the family holidayed for several months in Egypt, and here, she met Edward Stuart Wortley for the first time – her Eddy, as she frequently refers to him. He was on leave from the fighting in the Sudan to try to relieve General Gordon at Khartoum. She tells in some detail of his experiences in battles in the Sudan.

She married 'her Eddy' in 1891, and they honeymooned at Highcliffe Castle, lent to them by her husband's cousin, Louisa, Marchioness of Waterford, who was to died only a few months later so that she had been unable to get to know her as she would have wished.

Her books go into detail on the people and events at the times of the creation of both Highcliffe House and Highcliffe Castle. She also devotes chapters to her travels – visits to most countries around the Mediterranean; to Burma, India and Ceylon; to Brazil, Argentina and Chile. She was a much-travelled woman while her husband was still alive, mostly by ship. He sadly passed away in 1934 while in Tangiers, Morocco.

As regard visitors to the Castle, she tells of the visit of the German Emperor Wilhelm to Highcliffe in 1907. Having entertained King Edward VII there a few years earlier, they had received a telephone call one evening from Windsor

Castle. The caller had indicated that the Emperor would soon be in this country, and the King had thought he would enjoy a few days holiday after his visit, so would it be possible to take over their lovely Castle for a few days, the place that had provided him with so much pleasure? When … in seven days' time! 'How could we refuse', she asks, then tells of the frantic preparations that took place, which included her moving out while her husband remained, to prepare for the Emperor and his entourage!

At the end of her book 'Life Without Theory', she covers the time years later when the area experienced the build up to and the happenings of World War Two. She tells of the months of nightly air raid sirens sounding as Luftwaffe bombers passed overhead for inland targets; later, as the area experienced large parties of American soldiers in their midst; and at midnight one day when, after hearing unusually intensive amounts of air activity locally, she had gone outside and witnessed the sky full of planes, and the night time lit up, and how later, they were to know that they had watched the opening of D-Day.

After the war, she tells of the celebrations of Highcliffe village: "When the war had ended, and it seemed apparent that no one from the War Office, the Home Office, or for that matter, from any ministry, or even the Lord Lieutenant of the County, intended coming down to congratulate the inhabitants of Highcliffe upon their war effort, it was decided that 'Thank you' should be expressed by ourselves to ourselves." She tells of how they went about organisation, and how it was considered that the Castle would be the ideal place to have it, and how refreshments presented a difficulty, but that "the organising ability possessed by some members of the community, to the problem of catering for 200 people was as child's play". She goes on, "The Castle glowed with light and warmth that winter afternoon as we held our village party. Sadness was banished. Human nature we saw as if anew, revealed as composed for the most part of good, honest ingredients, with here and there a touch of the noblest elements. War had left us better fellow-citizens than it had found us.".

Violet Hunter Montague Stuart-Wortley left the Castle in 1950. She moved into Chewton Mill House, where she spent the last few years of her life, and passed away in 1953. She is buried, together with her husband, in the graveyard of St. Mark's Church, Highcliffe. The three books I have used (the one not previously mentioned is 'Magic in the Distance') are all to be found on the Archive shelves.

A Royal Visit – The Prince of Wales at Highcliffe

by Olive Samuel

It is nearly one hundred and twenty years ago that royalty stayed the weekend at Highcliffe Castle. Olive Samuel wrote an article in 1986 that documented the detail of the visit, and I reproduce it here in the original form – Ed

Just eighty-six years ago this July, His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales (later to become King Edward VII) spent a few days of relaxation and enjoyment at the French-Renaissance style Highcliffe Castle, near Christchurch, Dorset, (formerly in Hampshire) on a visit to Mr. and Mrs. W.G. Cavendish-Bentinck.

The 'Castle' was owned by the Hon. Major Edward Montague Stuart-Wortley who was then in South Africa, and had leased to Mr. Cavendish-Bentinck. Rosa Lewis was his cook, who gained fame depicted in the television serial as 'The Duchess of Duke Street".

A house party, invited especially to meet the Prince, included the Duchess of Marlborough, Count Mensdorff, the Earl and Countess Carrington and Lady Alexander Carrington, Viscount and Lady Georgiana Curzon, Viscount and Viscountess Chelsea, Viscount Villiers, and Lord Hyde. This impressive list of guests also contained the names of the Hon. George and Mrs. Keppel, and the Hon. John Scott-Montagu, who was the grandfather of the present Lord Montagu of Beaulieu.

It is doubtful whether all the guests could be accommodated over-night at the Castle, as there were few bedrooms available. The Prince of Wales had a large retinue to assist him, and always travelled with an enormous quantity of luggage - boxes of hats, and huge trunks of dress suits, morning coats, and other suitable clothes to enable him not to be seen twice in the same outfit when visiting anywhere. The variety of his dress was astonishing, and included foreign and British uniforms. At Marlborough House and Sandringham, he had about four hundred changes of attire. Highcliffe Castle must have been 'bursting at the seams' when the Prince visited for the weekend. Many of his retinue were lodged in the village of Highcliffe.

As reported in the Christchurch Times of July 21st 1900, the Prince travelled by special train from Waterloo, and had arrived at Hinton Admiral Station, which was fully decorated with bunting, at 5.16 p.m. on Friday 13th. Mr. Cavendish-Bentinck was there to greet his illustrious friend, and to whisk him speedily along Station Road (now Hinton Wood Avenue) to Highcliffe Castle. Flags and evergreen arches decorated the route, with the words 'God Bless the Prince of Wales' displayed. Children from the village school were lined up to give the Prince a hearty welcome.

The grounds of the Castle had been specially set out with garden furniture, and a red and blue tent, which was lit at night with Chinese lanterns. The guests at dinner were entertained daily by the Blue Hungarian Band, who played a selection of music. After dinner, the band played at the south front of the house under the Oriel window, whilst the Prince and the members of high society strolled on the lawns in the silvery moonlight reflected in the endlessly moving waves of the sea. Their rich dress would add to the grandness of the scene with the glitter of the lanterns,

The next morning, the future King toured the Castle, built 1830-1834 by Lord Stuart de Rothesay with stone incorporated from buildings of ancient French architecture. He viewed the beautiful furniture also of French origin, and all the valuable works of art; the house was indeed 'fit for a future King'. The Hon. John Scott-Montague then drove his Daimler car, which he had acquired the previous year, through the ilex avenue, with the Prince as a passenger. They travelled the dusty road to Hinton Admiral, and back down Roeshot Hill to Somerford, returning past the West Lodge, and along the sunken drive through the rhododendron woods to the Castle.

On arrival at the massive cathedral-like portico of the northern entrance to the house, Mr. Scott-Montagu requested Mr. Horatio Ellwood (the village schoolmaster, and an amateur photographer) to take a photograph. The Prince had permitted the schoolmaster to take a picture of him sitting in the now famous car. Mr. Ellwood was delighted to comply with his request.

Later on the Saturday afternoon, His Royal Highness and the house-party paid a visit to the Priory Church at Christchurch. The Vicar, the Rev. T.H. Bush, received them, and conducted the Prince on a detailed tour of the Church. He showed keen interest in the reredos and misericords. The tombs of Lord Strathnairn and Sir William Rose in the churchyard were shown at the request of the Prince.

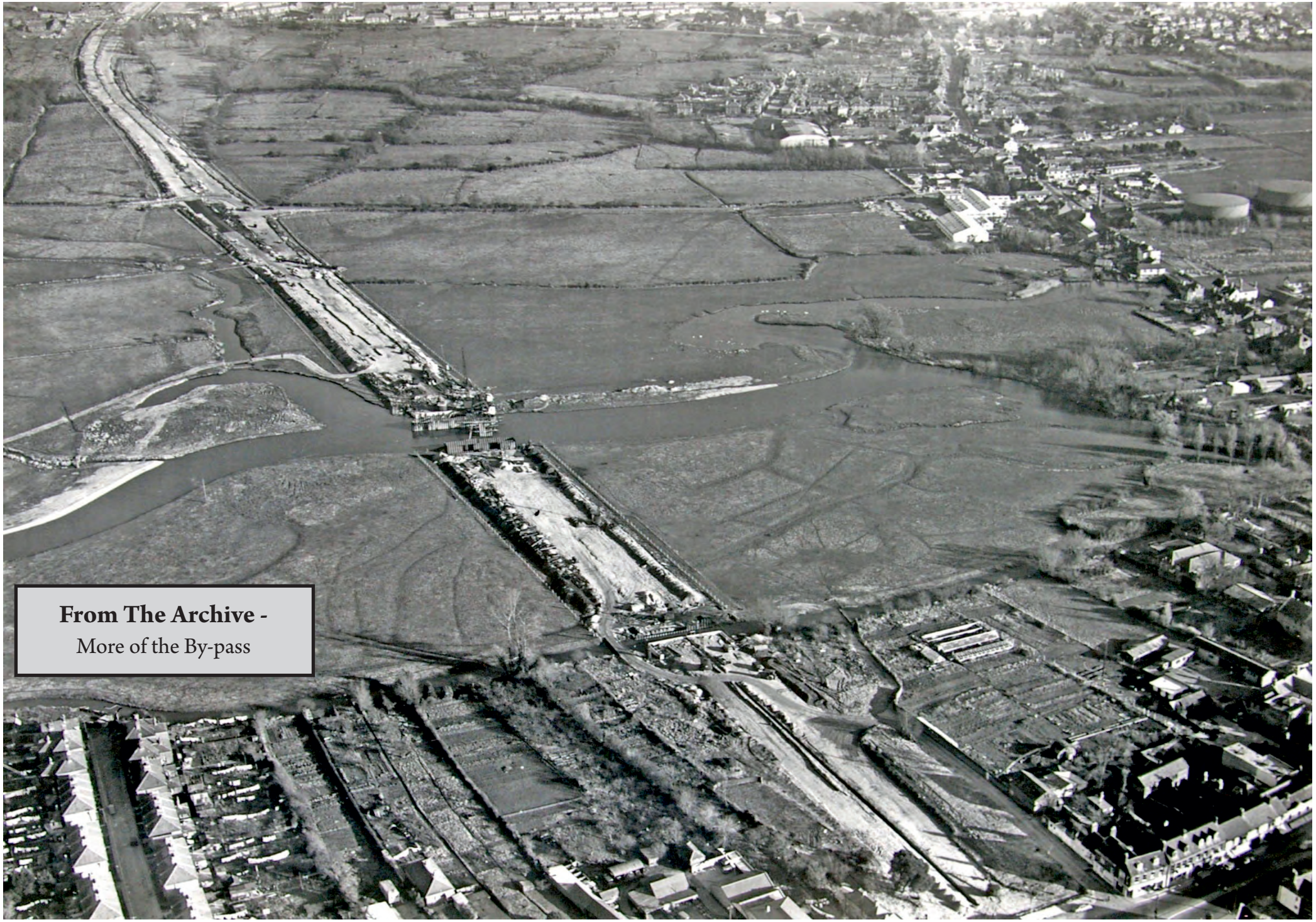
Policemen kept the large crowd at bay whilst the Prince of Wales and his party walked through the avenue of elms to the Church gates. Church Street and Market Square were packed with people trying to get a glimpse as the royal party drove through the gaily decorated town and back to Highcliffe.

On Sunday morning, the Prince attended St. Mark's Church, Highcliffe, accompanied by his hosts and the rest of the guests. Sir John Thursby, of Holmhurst, one of the churchwardens, met the Prince at the west door of the little church. The Vicar, the Rev. E.S. Carpenter preached the sermon, and the collection was for Boscombe Hospital and the Royal Victoria Hospital.

Some months previously, Mr. and Mrs. Cavendish-Bentinck had entertained a number of guests at the Castle, which had included Count Albert Mensdorff (a cousin of Prince Edward) and M. de Soveral, the Portuguese Ambassador known as the Blue Monkey, and also an intimate friend of the Prince. They also returned to the Castle together after Edward succeeded to the throne.

The Prince did not bid his hosts 'Goodbye' as, on Monday morning, they accompanied him on his return to Marlborough House. The royal train was waiting at Hinton Admiral Station, with Mr. Frederick Cook, the stationmaster and officials of the London and South Western Railway. Numerous spectators watched the Prince and the important guests leave at 11:00 a.m. and return from the area 'where time is pleasant' to the metropolis.

It was a memorable visit, and not made less so with the photograph taken of the Prince in the Daimler car by the door of Highcliffe Castle, a print of which Queen Elizabeth II now has in the family album.



From The Archive -
More of the By-pass

About the Centre-fold Picture

Another photograph of the Christchurch By-pass under construction in the 1950s. In this one, neither the bridge crossing the River Avon nor that crossing the Mill Stream are completed. Where the new road meets the end of the High Street, there appears to be a white rectangular strip, which is possibly the tunnel under the by-pass being built into the soil before being covered over with the road. In the lower left corner, the long straight road must be Beaconsfield Road, while in the extreme top left corner to the left of the by-pass would be the buildings of Staplecross Farm in Salisbury Road.

There is not a great number of things to point out on the right side of the photograph. There are the twin gas holders standing out at the gas works in Bridge Street / Rotten Row. These were dismantled during the last two years. Further up, the long straight road must be Purewell. The detail is not in the photograph to show clearly the Catholic Church or the Wesleyan Church. I believe the white building with the very dark roof to be the public house at the junction of Purewell and Stoney Lane, which was called the Olde Starre Inne, but has now been refurbished and goes under the name of The Smugglers Run.

Meeting Reports

Meeting on 3rd March 2020 - 'Lesser Known Bournemouth

The talk by Steve Roberts was typical of his – full of information about various subjects associated with the town. Having given a brief summary on how the town had begun and built up, he then talked about numerous aspects of the place, and there were usually several anecdotes associated with each of these aspects, which fully filled the evening.

CHS Speakers List for 2020

Keep a check of the website for the list of speakers at Society meetings. Once a restart date has been decided, and a schedule has been set, then they will appear there.

Field Marshall, The Lord Harding of Petherton G.C.B., C.B.E., M.C., D.S.O., & 2 bars, (1896-1989).

by Mike Kearley

My previous histories related to family relations and friends; Lord Harding's father married a lady who came from my wife's family; so not quite a blood relative! However, in the past 30 years, when I have researched my family and that of my wife, I have usually researched those who had married into our families, as is the case here. Lord Harding's story is amazing as he was the son of a clerk with H.R. Pole and Son, solicitors, of South Petherton; his parents were Francis Ebenezer Harding and Elizabeth "Bessie" Ellen Anstice, and he was born on 10 February 1896. I have traced the family back to 1729 and possibly 1684, and they mainly came from Somerset, in particular the South Petherton area. Many members of the Anstice family had also been in the District for centuries; in fact, in the 1881 census there were 34 of them, one being an imbecile! I am now printing a basic history for him.

Lord Harding was christened Allan Francis Harding into a fairly religious family and, as he said, it was a very full and happy family. He was not a particularly bright scholar, but did pass the necessary exams; he played sport at which he was average. So who would have thought that he would rise from such humble beginnings to be the head of the British Army, Chief of the Imperial General Staff and Governor of Cyprus? He nursed an ambition to be a farmer, but the family did not have enough capital to set him up; he thus entered the Civil Service as a reluctant boy clerk in a Post Office Savings Bank in London.

15th May 1914 marked the most important milestone from the Army's point of view; it was that he was persuaded to join the Territorial Army, which led him straight into being mobilised with the Territorial Army at the outbreak of the Great War. He joined Territorial Somerset Light infantry in the Machine Gun Corps. He was offered a regular commission as he was found to be an excellent soldier – and he was replacing officers killed in action; promotion was rapid because of this terrible slaughter of men; life expectancy of a junior officer was three months at the front; he showed great mental strength and thus never suffered shell shock, as many did. From 1915 to 1918 he served in Egypt, Sinai and Palestine; while war is dangerous anywhere, he had less chance of being killed there than in slaughter of mainland Europe. His first active service was as a platoon commander (aged 19 years !) at

Gallipoli in August 1915, where he landed at Suvia Bay. He was wounded a week later during the Battle of Kidney Hill, and evacuated to Egypt; he rejoined his unit at Anzac in October, in command of the machine gun station until evacuation.

He was awarded the Military Cross on 11th October 1917 for bravery and leadership at the Battle of Gaza, and the rank of Subaltern; he was again wounded there.

As a 21-year-old he applied for and was awarded a regular commission as a Lieutenant in the regular Army; his Adjutant in 1919 told him that Allan was not a suitable name for an officer in the Somerset Light Infantry, so henceforth he would be called John! Many years later, he changed his name by deed poll to Allan Francis John Harding. Such were the vagaries of the ruling classes then. Between the Wars, he led the normal life of a young regular officer, advancing slowly up the promotion ladder, attending the Staff College, and alternating between regimental and staff employment. He spent the summers of 1919 onwards in England, before being promoted as a Captain and being sent to India with the 12th Machine Gun Battalion; he was then appointed an Adjutant. Soldiering in India in those days was a good life for a young unmarried officer, with plenty of games – shooting, pig sticking, polo and an active social life, not too much work, but enough to keep interest, and all possible within the limits of pay! After six years in India, he returned on home leave in 1925 and remained in the U.K. until 1926; he studied at Staff College and passed the required examinations; he also courted a fellow officer's sister – Mary G.M. Roake. In 1926 he rejoined his regiment in Khartoum, returning to the U.K. the next year, where he and Mary were married. John attended Staff College at Camberley in 1928-29, a prerequisite for promotion from lower to higher officer rank. He learnt to appreciate the potential of armour. He worked very hard on the two-year course, and learnt a great deal from the then Colonel Bernard Montgomery, who was his tutor in tactics, and a brilliant teacher. He spent 1930 on regimental duty, and gained staff appointments at Southern Command H.Q. in Salisbury and Catterick. In 1934 fate stepped in, and he was promoted Brigade Major with the International Force during the Saar Plebiscite, and it was here that his education in international relations began; he was with the International Force, which comprised contingents from Britain, Holland, Italy and Sweden, gaining valuable experience of politico-military problems of a Brigade Major – but they did not then realise what

would happen to these different nations during World War 2. In 1936, he was stationed in the War Office, concerned with studying the problems with countering the threat to Egypt from Italian-held Cyrenaica – now Libya.

From 1937 to 1939 he was in the General Staff with responsibility for disarmament with League of Nations matters affecting the Army, Intelligence or intervention by Germany, Italy and the Spanish Civil War. He was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel on 1st January 1938. As the Second War approached, his responsibility changed to the Supply of War material to potential allies, not a very happy prospect as the British Army had little enough for themselves. He was promoted to Brevet Lieutenant Colonel aged 43 years, the youngest of that rank during World War 2; he took command of the 1st Battalion the Somerset Light Infantry, travelling to India in July 1939. He left his wife and son with her parents, who were to follow in due course, but the War intervened. John was frustrated because he was so far from the action; they thought the War would be over in six months! However, he was mentioned in dispatches! In September 1940, John left Bombay for Egypt; his ship was attacked by the Italian Air Force but there was no damage – John was not impressed! He was to find in due course that the Germans were much more efficient. He reported to General Headquarters Middle East, where in due course, he became General Archibald Wavell's personal liaison officer; and then General Richard O'Connor's Chief of Staff; subsequently he became liaison officer between General O'Connor and General Henry Maitland Wilson commanding British Troops in Egypt. He soon became Brigadier General Staff aged 44 years and was appointed C.B.E (Commander of the British Empire); they defeated the Italian Forces, leaving the allies in occupation of the greater part of Cyrenaica (Libya). This was an exciting, exhilarating and invaluable experience; General O'Connor described him as "An officer of outstanding ability, and I have never met a better staff officer".

However, Field Marshall Erwin Rommel, a brilliant tactical opportunist, arrived in Cyrenaica in February 1941, and launched a counter-offensive, and captured General O'Connor and General Neame, and many other soldiers - John was lucky not to be in the party at that time! However, he was then awarded his first D.S.O. (Distinguished Service Order) for service during the British offensive to relieve Tobruk during May to June 1941 – won for organising the local defense of the advance headquarters in the operation to relieve Tobruk, where he was directing the Headquarters staff; John narrowly escaped capture

himself, when Corps H.Q. was almost surrounded by the enemy, but managed to fight its way to join the beleaguered Tobruk garrison. Next came the second British offensive, and second German counter offensive. Harding was a tower of strength with his imperturbability and clarity of mind, in an exhausting and confusing series of battles. During 18 months in the desert, he never slept out of his clothes, but was exhilarated, frightened and frustrated in turn, but he was fortunately fit and well.

He was ordered to report to G.H.Q. Middle East in Cairo and promoted to Major General, where he met Field Marshall Bill Slim for the first time; he set up training establishments in Palestine and visited Iraq; in August, John was appointed Chief of Staff Middle East with responsibility for training, organization, and equipment. Meanwhile the third German counter-offensive had driven back the British Forces to El Alamein; Prime Minister Winston Churchill visited Cairo, and dismissed General Claude Auchinleck; General Alexander was appointed General Officer Commanding-in-Chief Middle East Command, becoming a Field Marshall in due course. General Montgomery was appointed to command the 8th Army, whilst Harding remained Deputy Chief of Staff; he was sent for by Monty and asked for a run down on all commanders and formations; there was a prolonged quiz by Monty; there was then a very strenuous time for John trying to meet Monty's demands for re-organisation, and equipment for the 8th Army. He was also detailed to show General Alexander around the desert. He was again mentioned is dispatches.

John was sent for by General Alexander on 17th September 1942, and he was told to return to the desert to become General Officer Commanding the 7th Armoured Division, who became known as the **Desert Rats.** He reported direct to Monty. During the El Alamein operation, he led the tactical headquarters forward to the main mine field area and commanded on the ground, from firstly his tank, then from a jeep – in which his Aide-de-camp was killed beside him; life was precarious! The decisive Battle of El Alamein was from 23rd October to 11th November 1942. He was a first class armoured commander, always well forward in the battle, and almost frightingly regardless of his own safety; however, he later confirmed that he was very frightened and anxious. Rommel was not only defeated, but the Allies cut off his food and fuel supplies, a nightmare for any army. John was awarded his 2nd D.S.O.

However, these battles came as a cost to John – he was severely wounded but escaped with his life when he was blown up in a tank – he lost three fingers, had a severely injured left arm and right leg and on 17th June 1943, when he was standing on top of his brigade commander's tank, urging the latter to get his armour forward to assail the enemy, a shell landed nearby, knocking him off the tank – and he was wounded by shell splinter in his chest, right thigh, and left arm – he was subsequently awarded his 3rd D.S.O. Any attempts to evacuate him by ambulance over the rugged country were sure to be fatal, so his men worked all night to construct an emergency landing strip; next day while the fighters of the Desert Air Force fought running battles against the Luftwaffe overhead, we was evacuated by ambulance to Cairo and he suffered a great loss of blood and nearly died; he spent January to July in Cairo for various operations, with wonderful care and attention. He had a difficult trip back to the U.K., where between July and October, he was again in and out of hospital and was then sent to what is now Nuffield Orthpaedic Centre, and eventually they restored movement to his left arm and right leg; he was out of action for nine months – and despite all this, he lived to be 93 years of age!

In November 1943 John was appointed to command 8th Corps, joining OVERLORD, then training for the Normandy landings and the invasion of Europe; at least he had time to see his family for Christmas 1943; he visited many units and formations, intent on ensuring that lessons learnt were applied to future operations. However, this came to an end when he was appointed Chief of Staff to General Alexander in the 15th Corps., and he spent the rest of the War in the Mediterranean area. He became very worried about the plans for the Anzio landing, and these fears were to be proved correct. He was then called to Marrakesh for a conference with Prime Minister Churchill; and was responsible for the final drive to Trieste; immediately after the War he commanded 13th Corps in Trieste in troubled times, and on 16th June 1944 was awarded the K.C.B. by King George VI as Sir John Allan Francis Harding – Knight Commander of the Order of the Bath.

to be continued – Editor.

Cranemoor

by Geoffrey Bush

A recent query received by the Society was trying to establish if there were any links of a person known to have lived in Lymington during the late 1930s with Cranemoor House in Highcliffe. The person was a headmistress of a private school (never identified), and had written letters in the past to relatives about Cranemoor, although never mentioning Highcliffe. Needless to say, complications (like her having divorced her husband) were there as well! Initial research didn't find a connection, so we made our own queries to the enquirer. These extracted data that showed the correspondence letters previously mentioned actually were written at least ten years before the connection with Lymington was known to have occurred. I don't believe we will be able to assist the enquirer any further, but we have suggested other places that might be contacted for possible information.

For those that may not know, Cranemoor House is still in existence, although not in the form it once was. It is at the junction of Hinton Wood Avenue and Cranemoor Avenue, near the Hinton Admiral Station. It is now several houses in the one building.

Research on Cranemoor House (of which the Society holds a few references) had progressed while waiting for a response to our queries, and it is surprising these days just what can be found on the internet. This is what was unearthed.

1800s – it is not sure when the house was built. Several years ago, there was a booklet written about Cranemoor House that stated it was built in 1806, but didn't give the source for this information. It indicated that the place has been difficult to sell.

1851 census – but it existed then as the home of the Ivemy family. George Ivemy was a local farmer.

1866 – an advertisement appeared in a newspaper for a 'man able to drive a pair of horses' to apply to 'Cranemoor' – no surname was given as to whom had placed the advert.

1890 – Thomas Elphinstone Esquire was living there. Thomas Elphinstone came from a banking family from the Midlands that moved to this area in the early 19th century. Before this date, Thomas had lived at 'Chewton Glen', an even bigger house.

1894 – the auction of house contents was advertised. Thomas Elphinstone had died in 1893.

1894 – G H M Ricketts and family resided there for next 10 years, according to newspaper cuttings.

1904 – Ricketts family leaving. They must have been renting the property from the Elphinstone owners for in …

1906 – during a court case where Capt. Alexander Elphinstone was accused of fraud, it was stated he would inherit Cranemoor when his mother died, and that the place was currently unoccupied.

1909 – a newspaper advert for Preparatory School for Boys at Cranemoor, Highcliffe being run by John Bennett Luckham, BA, Cambridge, and Arthur Basil Blagden, BA, Cambridge. The school was being called Luckham's School.

1920s – it is unclear what happened to Luckham's School. Both JB Luckham and AH Blagden appear to have achieve old ages before they died, but in a booklet about Hinton, it is stated it closed when the rent became more than the occupiers could afford. For the next few years, things became 'unclear'. Several different names appear, but the only similar connections appear to be in the name of the place they gave to be contacted – Cranemoor.

In 1922, an advert was placed for a cook and kitchen maid for 'Cranemoor Guest House', and to apply to someone by the name of Croft.

In 1923, an advert is placed for the 'New Thought Guest House'.

A letter sent to the editor of the Western Morning News in 1924 on the subject of the 'Emancipation of Women' is signed by 'Madge Benson of Cranemoor, Highcliffe'.

In 1925, Mr W.G. Hooper is lecturing on 'Concentration, Meditation, and Illumination' and says he is the 'Proprietor of Cranemoor Guest House'.

The next thing found is in a book titled 'Army, University and Civil Service Tutors' dated 1926, which gives a picture and text about 'Cranemoor, Principal F. Pettipher, BSc'. It states it was 'a coaching establishment for boys 8 to 17 years, together with a prep group of younger pupils. Frank Pettifer was involved with Boy Scouting, and had been recorded in that role in the district in November 1925, according to the local newspaper.

W.G. Hooper continues giving lectures around the country. He also wrote books, and edited the New World Magazine, always giving Cranemoor as his contact address.

1930s –In 1932, the school was put up for sale, but didn't meet the asking price. The school did continue though. In 1934, they advertised for a 'house boy for a boys' school, aged 17-18, able to do housework and wait table – apply Pettipher, Cranemoor'. Then in 1937, there was an advert for 'A cook able to use an Aga, to cook for 20 persons – apply Cranemoor'.

During this period there are several references to Cranemoor through the wife of the principal. She was Grace E Pettipher, and went around the country lecturing, and she was also the daughter of Rev Dr. William Hooper, author and lecturer we have just mentioned. They both lectured on behalf of The Church of Christ and Devine Science, and gave their residence as either Cranemoor, or Cranemoor Training College. They are recorded as having lectured in Lancashire and Scotland, and the Church claims it was because of the series of lectures that Rev. Dr. Hooper and his daughter had given in Nelson, Lancashire that a thriving Church was now established there.

The 1939 National Register lists the building as 'Cranemoor College' and shows eighteen people in residence, including both husband and wife Pettipher and Hooper, with college staff, and teenaged students. Frank Pettipher is

registered as a schoolmaster, but a 1939 directory of the area still records him as the Principal of a tutorial school.

1940s – during the war period, numerous large residences in strategic areas were requisitioned by the Military, and this area was indeed one of those areas. Cranemoor was taken over by the Fire Service in 1942. After the war, these houses were returned to the owners. In 1946, Cranemoor was put up for auction, but again, didn't meet the asking price. At that time, there was a severe shortage of civilian accommodation for the public. As a result, Cranemoor was taken over by the local Council for housing, and stayed that way into the middle 1950s, until the quantity of housing accommodation in the surrounding district had been rectified, and the building was returned to private ownership.

And that is where our current knowledge ceases until we can access our Archive to check further. It looks like the house had connections with a new modern religion between the war years.

The pictures shown on the opposite page

The top picture:-

HOLDENHURST: The village of Holdenhurst is now regarded as being in the suburbs of Bournemouth, but its history is very old, and coins of the Durotriges tribes and Romans have been found in the area. This photograph shows St. John's Church, and the few houses and farms. The village was included in the Bournemouth County Borough in the early 1930s. In the extreme lower right corner is just visible the north-going carriageway of the Bournemouth Spur Road (A338), built in the late 1960s. This cut the access to the village from the south. Access by road is now only possible via the Throop Road. Hurn Court (formerly Heron Court) Estate is nearby.

The lower picture:-

ROYAL BOURNEMOUTH AND CHRISTCHURCH HOSPITAL: Off Castle Lane East, and near the Cooper-Deane roundabout, the first phase of the hospital was opened in 1989, followed by the second phase three years later. This photograph shows mainly the rear of the site. The West and East wings are partially shown; the lighter rooves on the left are the West wing. Above the two wings is the large lake, and the building with the red roof above the West wing is the Derwent building. The buildings above the East wing house ancillary facilities, such as education and meeting rooms, and fitness gymnasium. The road at the top is the Spur Road (A338) coming from the north, and the carparks adjacent to it have long since been converted to multi-storey versions, mainly for the use of the staff. The buildings on the extreme right side of the photograph are the Retired Nurses National Home.

Information for Society Members

Articles for the Journal are always welcome. Send them to :

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Pictures from theAir

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